

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is [Justin](#). I am a resident of [West Hartford](#), and [a psychiatrist](#).

I am testifying in support of SB 4 as noticed for this hearing, including a winter eviction moratorium, limits on application fees and late fees, and other policies that promote housing stability for tenants. Specifically, with amendments to better protect tenants including protections for tenants to address skyrocketing rents and increases in evictions.

The reason I am taking the time to write this as a busy medical resident with limited free time is because of the impact that unstable housing has on my patients. In my training to become a doctor, I worked in a variety of fields and in almost every one I have seen patients impacted by unstable housing conditions.

While in pediatrics, I worked with children with severe lead poisoning because their family could not afford to live in a place that had been updated. This was also the case with a number of respiratory illnesses due to mold in their buildings. No parent wants to subject their child to these risk factors but in our current housing market, that is not always possible. What is even more disheartening is meeting new parents who need to make the tough decision between buying their baby formula or being able to pay rent. More access to affordable housing and protections for tenants to address rent increases is needed now.

In my work as a psychiatrist, I work with a number of patients who lost housing due to rent increases and the resulting fall out landed them in the hospital. Evictions (many caused by rent increases) are associated with higher suicide mortality rates and increases in mental health hospitalizations. I have seen patients admitted to the hospital due to a depressive episode spurred by a rent increase. The fear of not finding an additional \$300 dollars for a rent increase and having to find new housing in 30 days is crippling for many.

Another patient I saw who needed to be admitted to the hospital initially refused for fear of not being able to go to work and make their monthly rent. In Connecticut, over 50% of renters in Connecticut are considered cost-burdened by their rent – meaning they are spending over 30% of their income on housing and associated housing costs ([Connecticut Data Collaborative](#)). People are so burdened that they have to refuse medical services for fear of being evicted if they miss a day of work and can't make rent.

I want to cite another study that I have also seen play out in my hospital. A 2022 study in New Haven showed that adults who had experienced an eviction had higher odds of going to the emergency department than those who did not experience an eviction (Smith 2022). Just this last weekend a patient was admitted to the ED who had hypothermia. This patient recently lost their housing and because of that, had increased difficulty accessing their psychiatric care such as filling and taking their prescription. This led to mood instability and increased confusion in the patient who was found outside in shorts and a T-shirt in 20 degree weather. This is just one story, there is another patient who lost their housing and has been admitted to the hospital 12 times in the past 3 months.

A 2020 study by the US Government Accountability Office found that a \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% increase in homelessness. With the rent increases we are seeing in Connecticut, this number will increase as will the number of patients admitted to the hospital.

Unless action is taken to ensure safer housing for our Connecticut residents, health outcomes will get worse and our hospitals will become more strained.

Sincerely,

Justin

West Hartford